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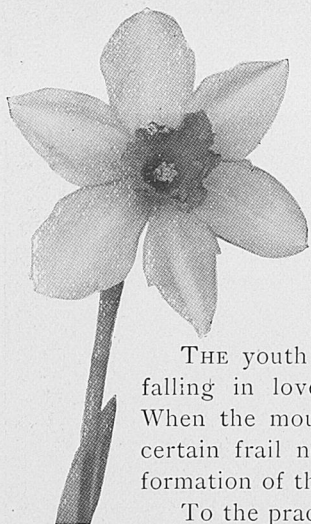
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THE FLOWERS NARCISSUS

BY MERCY BLAISDELL.

Illustrated from photographs of natural flowers by Pitcher and Manda.

THE youth Narcissus gazed at his own image in a spring, and, falling in love with it, remained in rapt admiration until he died. When the mourners came to take away his body, they found only certain frail new flowers, which they conceived to be merely a transformation of the young man, and accordingly called Narcissus.

To the practical mind it would seem that many a love-sick Narcissus must have been thus magically changed into flowers, for from twenty to thirty wild species occur in Europe and Asia. Some of these are distributed among different genera by certain botanists, and the gardeners, who have improved the species, know many of them by other names. A study of the few examples reproduced in these pages will give some idea of the range of form and their exquisite outlines and delicacy of texture.

The daffodils of the poets, "that come before the swallow dares," and "haste away so soon," belong to one section, having the central, cup-like ring of the flower, generally called a "crown," prolonged into a flaring trumpet with crimped edges; the color is one of the clearest of yellows, and there is a distinct fragrance. Besides the common English daffadownilly, so sweetly sung by Herrick, there are other species, paler and smaller, in this same section.



THE PAPER-WHITE, GRAND-FLOWERING NARCISSUS.



VON LION'S NARCISSUS.

The lovely yellow jonquils, both single and double, together with the pheasant's-eye narcissi, form another group. The poet's narcissus, one of this last class, is the loveliest of them all. It springs almost out of the snow, in old gardens, and the snow is not so white as its broad star-like perianth, with shallow, red-edged crown. The flowers have a strong odor, which at a distance is delightful, but close by is almost distasteful to most persons.

While most of them are perfectly hardy, growing in open borders, one of the narcissi, the so-called Chinese sacred lily, grows in simple water. The bulbs are large, and come to this country from China, packed in stiff gray clay. It is said that the people of the

Flowery Kingdom know a secret way of preparing them for forcing, and refuse to divulge it. More probably, some peculiarity of soil or climate prevents us from succeeding with them. At any rate, all are imported. These Chinese lilies, which may often be seen growing in sunny windows of Chinese laundries and shops all over the country, are a type of the many-flowered (polyanthus) species of narcissi. Instead of bearing a single flower on a stalk, as do the other groups of narcissi, bunches of fragrant small flowers, ranging through all shades of yellow to white, are massed on a stem.

The paper-white narcissus, one of this group, an early flowering variety shown in one of the illustrations, is often used for forcing, as it blooms in winter like the hyacinth.

Narcissus Bulbocodium, one of the hoop-petticoat narcissi, has small, bright-yellow flowers, in which the perianth, usually the most important part of the flower, is completely overshadowed by the expanded crown, which suggests the swaying crinolines that women wore thirty years ago.

The narcissi are members of the Amaryllis family, that, in the classification of plant orders, is near Orchids and Lilies, all having leaves in which the veins extend from petiole to apex, all



A PAPER-WHITE NARCISSUS.



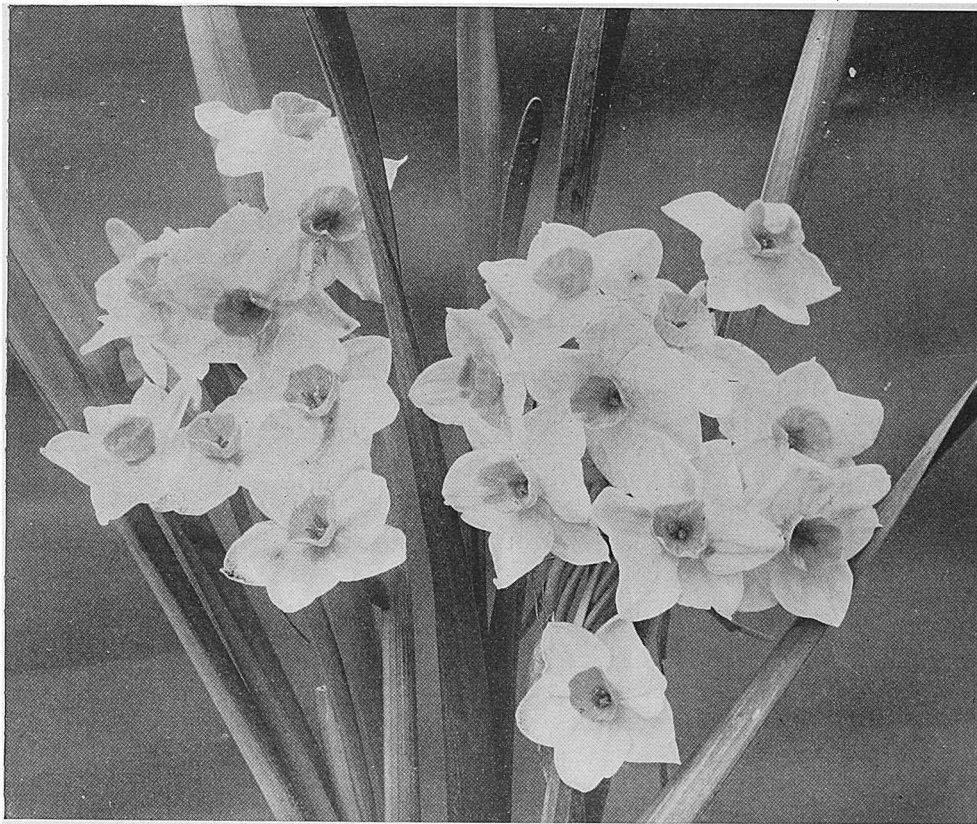
ONE OF THE HOOP-PETTICOATS (*NARCISSUS BULBOCODIUM*).



THE TRUMPET-MAJOR NARCISSUS.

parallel. Daffodils and narcissi both rise from bulbs, and their leaves, shaped like broad grass-blades more or less rigid, grow in dense tufts, out of which the bright flowers nod cheerily in the spring sunshine. They never sleep, those sprightly daffodils, but gleam in the night, perhaps hoping to attract some stray insect that has been visiting other flowers of the same kind, and thus benefit by the pollen dusted on his wings by his former hosts.

In decoration these flowers, with their clear outline, the star-like perianth, and the crowns often fluted and crinkled, and brilliantly colored, lend themselves, as do the irises, to severe, but picturesque effects. They naturally suggest wreaths and garlands, since, like daisies, one promptly thinks of stringing them on ribbons.



A POLYANTHUS NARCISSUS.

Here is Robert Herrick's dainty poem, alluded to above :

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
 You haste away so soon :
 As yet the early rising sun
 Has not attain'd his noon.
 Stay, stay,
 Until the hasting day
 Has run
 But to the even-song ;
 And, having pray'd together, we
 Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
 We have as short a spring ;
 As quick a growth to meet decay
 As you, or anything.
 We die,
 As your hours do, and dry
 Away,
 Like to the summer's rain ;
 Or as the pearls of morning's dew
 Ne'er to be found again.